STAY SAFE MN

# Questions and Answers: COVID-19 Testing for Middle and High School Students

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**We are at a critical point as cases continue to rise—especially among younger Minnesotans. We must take action to keep our students learning in-person and participating in activities.**

As community spread of COVID-19 continues in Minnesota, Governor Walz, Lt. Governor Flanagan and the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) continue to emphasize the importance of COVID-19 testing to slow the spread.

Minnesota is experiencing high circulation of variants of COVID-19. For example, it is currently estimated that 60% of all COVID-19 cases in Minnesota are the B.1.1.7. variant strain, which is a new version of the virus that spreads more easily. **The spread of COVID-19 variants, including B.1.1.7, is contributing to a sharp increase in COVID-19 cases statewide in Minnesota and in particular we are seeing more cases concentrated in the school-age population, especially among middle and high school students.**

Every middle and high school student is strongly encouraged to get tested for COVID-19 every two weeks. Students participating in sports are strongly recommended to test at least once per week.

All Minnesota schools (public school districts, public charter schools, nonpublic schools and tribal schools) are strongly encouraged to make testing more accessible to our students by promoting existing testing opportunities in their communities and offering testing opportunities for students on-site in their middle and high school buildings. Tests will be no-cost to students or schools. The State of Minnesota will provide test kits and resources for all options.

School testing options:

1.  Host in-person COVID-19 testing events for all middle and high school students every two weeks. These could be held in tandem with the existing staff testing program.

2.  Make Zoom-enabled COVID-19 tests available every two weeks for any middle and high school student to pick up, take home and return to school to be sent to the lab. For this option, schools should allow students who do not have a home mailing address or who have limited access to technology to take the test in a school building.

3.  A combination of the two.

## Are students required to test?

Students are not required to test; however, it is strongly encouraged that all students every two weeks.

Anyone participating in organized sports is strongly encouraged to get tested at least once per week for COVID-19. Learn more about sports testing on the Stay Safe Minnesota – Organized Sports webpage. Questions about sports testing should be directed to health.sports.covid19@state.mn.us.

## How can students access testing?

The student COVID-19 testing program at each middle and high school may look different. Some students may access testing on-site at their school, some may use Zoom-enabled test kits at home, and others may access other testing options provided by the State of Minnesota. Schools should communicate with students and families regarding what is being offered in school and in the community. Families should check in with their school to learn more about their individual testing program.

Students, like all Minnesota residents, have several other testing options available to them. This table outlines additional options for testing:

| Testing Option | Description | Where to find more information |
|---|---|---|
| **COVID-19 At-home Test (Vault saliva test)** | No-cost, at-home option for anyone with or without symptoms | For more information: https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/testsites/athome |
| **COVID-19 Community Testing Sites (Vault saliva test)** | No-cost in-person option for anyone with or without symptoms | For more information: https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/testsites/community<br><br>To schedule an appointment: https://mncovidtestingappt.as.me/schedule.php |
| **Other options through local clinics, hospitals, and pharmacies** | A map and search fields are provided where you can narrow down your search to testing options by city or zip code. | For more information: https://mn.gov/covid19/get-tested/testing-locations (located near the bottom of the page.) |

# Are schools required to offer testing?

In order to increase access to testing for students, all schools are strongly encouraged to implement at least one of the options below to expand access to COVID-19 testing for students. Tests will be no-cost to students or schools. The State of Minnesota will provide test kits and resources for all options.

School testing options:

1. Host in-person COVID-19 testing events for all middle and high school students every two weeks. These could be held in tandem with the existing staff testing program.

2. Make Zoom-enabled COVID-19 tests available every two weeks for any middle and high school student to pick up, take home and return to school to be sent to the lab. For this option, schools should allow students who do not have a home mailing address or who have limited access to technology to take the test in a school building.

3. A combination of the two.

All public schools should to continue to accept COVID-19 tests for UPS mailing from students who have taken an in-home test from the State of Minnesota.

# Who should be engaged in determining student testing options at a school?

All schools are strongly encouraged to provide testing for students. Districts and charter schools should consult with their Incident Command Team or other advisory councils including board members, bargaining units, staff, students, and families to ensure accurate information is shared and feedback is sought.

# Who will receive the test result?

The test result will be provided to the individual tested by accessing their Vault account using the username and password they created. Schools will not receive test results or Vault account information directly. Students and/or their parents or legal guardians are strongly encouraged to inform schools of positive results so that the school can take steps to prevent the spread of the virus to other students and staff.

The only people who will have access to an individual's private information will be authorized public health staff from MDH and Local Public Health agencies, contracted staff who are helping MDH with its COVID-19 response, and others as required by law. Students will have a username and password so that parents or legal guardians can also log in and see results.

# How will schools receive their testing supplies?

Schools offering an on-site testing option to students will continue to request testing supplies by completing an MDE survey to register for the program and indicate how many test kits are needed.

If a school is already registered for the staff testing program, additional tests for students can be requested through the Collection Report and Order Form. Based on the supplied information, Vault health—the test provider—will ship supplies directly to the school district, charter school, nonpublic or tribal school to access.

The Collection Report and Order Form survey must be completed every two weeks, within 24 hours of the staff or student testing date.

# What should a student do if they receive a positive test result?

If a positive test result is received, students should stay home from school or activities and follow their school's policy for reporting a confirmed COVID-19 case. MDH or local public health will **call** the student or guardian directly with important health information for them and the people with whom they live. It is important to answer the call from the health department, as the call will provide information about how to keep students, and their family and community safe.

People who test positive for COVID-19 must stay at home until all three of these things are true:

- Their cough, shortness of breath, or other symptoms are better; and
- It has been 10 days since they first felt sick or since the date of the positive test if they have no symptoms; and
- They have had no fever for at least 24 hours, without using medicine that lowers fever.

More information can be found in MDH's Attendance Guide for Parents and Families.

# How accurate is the saliva test?

This saliva test is just as accurate as other tests like nasal swabs, according to the test manufacturer. It tests to see whether you currently have the virus that causes COVID-19. It is not an antibody (or serology) test, which can be used to tell if you may have had the virus in the past. The FDA approved this saliva test on April 10, 2020, and the Minnesota Department of Health supports its use.

# Why are students encouraged to test every two weeks?

This frequent testing is used as a screening tool. Knowing that the incubation period for the virus is 14 days, this will allow students to be tested regularly enough to find children who have no symptoms of COVID-19 yet are able to spread the virus to others. When children are identified as positive, they can be isolated and close contacts can be identified and quarantined, limiting potential spread of the virus. Anyone who has symptoms between regular in-school testing opportunities should stay home and seek testing at another location immediately. Do not attend school or activities or wait for the testing day at school.

# Should students test even without symptoms?

Yes. Testing every two weeks can help detect children with no symptoms of COVID-19 but who are able to spread the virus. Up to 50% of people may not have symptoms of COVID-19 but still be able to spread the virus. Students who are experiencing symptoms should contact their healthcare provider or visit a COVID-19 Community Testing Site.

# How long will the test take?

Registration and testing should take no more than 15-20 minutes. Results are typically available within 48 hours of being received at State saliva testing laboratory sites.

# Can students still go to school while waiting for test results?

Students without symptoms or known exposure should continue to go to school or participate in activities while waiting for test results. If a student is experiencing symptoms or has knowingly been exposed to COVID-19, they should stay home, get tested, and follow quarantine guidance if they are a close contact to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.

# Who pays for these tests?

These COVID-19 saliva tests will be provided at no cost to students. Costs are covered by the State. The State of Minnesota will supply schools with the training and test kits they need to conduct testing every two weeks, if a school chooses to offer that option for students. The State will also offer Zoom-enabled tests for middle and high schools to have on hand for students to take home, if they choose to offer that option for students.

# Should fully vaccinated students continue testing regularly?

Fully vaccinated students who are two weeks past their last dose of vaccine, do not need to participate in weekly ongoing testing. However, routine testing may still be recommended in other settings. In addition, vaccinated individuals should still get tested if they develop symptoms of COVID-19.

For more resources on what to do after being vaccinated, see About COVID-19 Vaccine and Interim Public Health Recommendations for Fully Vaccinated People.

# Should participants still test weekly if they have been diagnosed with or tested positive for COVID-19?

Most of the time, routine testing is not recommended for people who have tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 90 days. People who work in health care settings and some other workplaces may have different guidelines. For more information, see What You Need to Know After Having COVID-19.

# Where can I learn more about different types of testing and find related guidance?

MDH offers comprehensive guidance about COVID-19 testing on its website, which students and school staff, and school officials are encouraged to review. See COVID-19 Testing (https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/testsites/index.html). This guidance includes:

▪ Resources about different types of COVID-19 molecular (including "PCR") tests, antigen tests ("rapid tests") and tests for past infections ("antibody tests"), including COVID-19 home tests. These resources explain the process for each test, what each type tests for, and some of the risks and benefits of each testing option.

MDH also provides detailed guidance for people who are sick or have tested positive for COVID-19 in addition to guidance on COVID-19 exposure, identifying "close contacts" of COVID-19 cases, and what "close contacts" should do to prevent further transmission.

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